

Leitfragen für die Untersuchung von dramatischen Texten

What kind of play is it? (tragedy, comedy, one-act play, tragic comedy, etc.)

The exposition

- Is the exposition presented as a complete set of information, or does it leave much room for interpretation?
- What is the setting of the play and how is it presented? By the dialogue or by the scenery?
- Do elements of the scenery have a symbolic function?
- What kind of atmosphere is evoked?
- What hints at the theme of the play are given?
- Who are the main characters and how are they introduced?
- What conflict sets the action in motion?
- How does the audience learn about the background to the action?
- Are there any flashbacks presenting scenes from the past?

The characters

- Are the characters flat or rounded characters?
- Who is the protagonist/antagonist?
- What constellation of characters is presented? Does it remain unchanged during the course of action?
- What kind of characterization is used (direct/indirect)?
- What are the protagonist's characteristics?
- Do any of the main characters undergo a change?
- What does the character's way of speaking indicate?

The plot

- Does the play have any double plots or subplots?
- How is tension created?
- Are there any scenes forming a contrast/a parallelism?
- Are there any scenes providing comic relief?
- Does the action lead to the protagonist's intended effect?
- Does the plot have a significant pattern of events (repetition, contrast or parallelism)?
- Does the plot have a circular structure?
- Does the setting also indicate a circular structure?

The dramatic structure

- When does the drama reach a climax?
- How is the rising/falling action created?
- Are there any turning points?
- Does the drama have a solution/dénouement, or is it open-ended?
- Does it end in a catastrophe?
- Does the drama have a two-act/three-act /five-act structure, or does it lack a conventional structure?

The dialogue

- What striking stylistic features does the dialogue have?
- How do the characters communicate?
- Do they talk at cross-purposes?
- Is the communication between the characters impaired?
- What is the intention/motive expressed in a character's dialogue/monologue?
- Does the dialogue carry the action forward?
- What is the function of the monologue in a scene?
- Does the dialogue/monologue provide insight into a character's motives/state of mind/feelings?

The setting

- Is there a clear or only vaguely specified setting?
- Is there a particular connection between indoor and outdoor scenes?
- Is the setting introduced in the dialogue or by the stage directions/scenery?
- Does the play have very detailed or sparse stage directions?
- What information do they concentrate on?
- How often does the setting change?
- What range of time does the play cover?